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HISTORIC AND NATURAL DISTRICTS
INVENTORY FORM

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

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YOUR NAME: Steven Ruttenbaum DATE: Feb. 7, 1983

YOUR ADDRESS: 30 W. 86 St., NYC 10024 TELEPHONE: 212/496-8453

ORGANIZATION (if any): _____

1. NAME OF DISTRICT: Manhattan Psychiatric Center, Ward's Island

2. COUNTY: New York TOWN/CITY: New York VILLAGE: _____

3. DESCRIPTION: Manhattan Psychiatric Center is located on the north-western section of Ward's Island in the East River between Manhattan and Queens. To the south of the center is Ward's Island Park, and to the east is a sewage disposal plant, which are both controlled by the City of New York. The center has a long history of being a psychiatric hospital, yet only six structures built prior to 1945 survive to this day. So many old buildings have been demolished to make way for modern structures that there is little remaining to indicate how the center once appeared.

Three of the existing buildings are large, red brick neo-Georgian structures located in the southern and eastern sections of the center. They are low-rise structures, not exceeding three
(continued)

4. SIGNIFICANCE:

Manhattan Psychiatric Center is important because it was a late 19th century location for pioneering psychiatric treatment and research. (See Historical Summary)

see

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06101.00 08513

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06101.008515

5. MAP:

06101.008516

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6. SOURCES:

(See Bibliographic Essay)

7. THREATS TO AREA:

BY ZONING ☐

BY ROADS ☐

BY DEVELOPERS ☐

BY DETERIORATION ☐

OTHER _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. LOCAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AREA:

9. PHOTOS:

Manhattan Psychiatric Center

3. Description continued:

floors in height. The remaining three buildings, which are located in the eastern section of the center, are two-floor clapboard residences used by the hospital staff.

There are two additional features of the center which are worthy of note. In the 1920s, a formal Roman Garden was built in the south-central section of the center. It is still an attractive, though deteriorated, oasis. To the southeast of the garden are the ruins of a greenhouse built in 1901.

Manhattan Psychiatric CenterHistorical Summary

Ward's Island got its name from the Ward family who owned the island in the early 19th century. The island's history of governmental use began in the 1840s when the U.S. Immigration Office built hospital buildings to care for sick and destitute immigrants. It also served as a camp site for tuberculosis patients and as a prison camp during the Civil War. In 1871, the City of New York constructed a new building on Ward's Island for patients suffering from mental illness to relieve overcrowded conditions at other city hospitals. This new institution gradually expanded into the buildings that had previously been used by the immigration office and prison camp. In 1896, the hospital came under the control of New York State. Later in 1905, the state consolidated separate male and female facilities into Manhattan State Hospital which then became the largest psychiatric institution in the world with 4393 patients.

The oldest surviving buildings at the psychiatric center are clapboard staff residences (Buildings No. 85, 86 and 87) which were constructed in 1902 under the supervision of New York State Architect, George L. Heins. They were located within the right-of-way of the Triborough Bridge when it was built in 1935-36, so they were moved to their present locations in the eastern section of the center. (The ruins of a 1901 greenhouse, Building No. 70, also survive to a very limited extent in the southern section of the center.)

In 1915, the Keener residence hall (Building No. 64) was constructed under the supervision of State Architect Lewis F. Pilcher. He was also responsible for the construction of two additional surviving buildings, Mabon residence hall (Building No. 13) in 1917 and the Assembly Hall (Building No. 41) in 1923. It was also in the 1920s that the Roman Garden was completed in the south-central section of the center, as well as the small wooden pergola in the eastern section of the center. Since no original architectural drawings exist for any of the old structures at the center, it is impossible to ascertain the architects and exact dates of construction for these two features.

In the 1930s, Ward's Island was further developed by the city. A sewage disposal plant was constructed east of the psychiatric center, and the Triborough Bridge was constructed through the hospital property itself. At this time, the state began to transfer patients from the hospital to other facilities because its lease on the island from New York City was to officially expire in 1943. It was anticipated that the City would convert most of the island to park use. However, in 1946 the City awarded 122 acres of the island to the state for continued hospital use and built Ward's Island Park to the south of the psychiatric center. Most of the old buildings at the center were demolished during an extensive rebuilding campaign that

was initiated in the 1950s and continued into the 1970s.

Even though there is no distinguished historic architecture surviving at the center, much notable progress was made there in the treatment of mental diseases. In 1877, the institution was the first anywhere to open its wards to medical students and practitioners so that mental illness could be observed and studied. At the turn of the century, pioneering research was conducted on the effect of colors on the nervous system. Music therapy was employed at that time, as well as an elementary form of electric-shock therapy, x-ray therapy and hydrotherapy. In 1906, the institution employed the first social worker in the state hospitals to treat patients in their own communities. The hospital was also the first home of the research- and teaching-oriented New York Psychiatric Institute, which moved from the center to upper Manhattan in 1929. Since that time, other institutions have taken the lead in pioneering psychiatric treatment and research.

Manhattan Psychiatric Center

Bibliographic Essay

Primary sources of historical data regarding the Manhattan Psychiatric Center are extremely limited. In fact, the only primary sources available are annual reports of the institution for the years 1899 - 1908. For the most part, the information contained in these reports is limited to statistical data regarding the composition of the hospital's patient population and a short description of the treatment administered to patients.

The most complete source of historical information regarding the hospital is contained in three secondary documents. These are short, unpublished histories of the institution prepared by hospital staff. One of them, which is titled, "A Short Historical Sketch of Ward's Island," was written (date unknown) by Dr. Phillip Smith. The second one is titled, "History of Manhattan State Hospital" (author and date unknown). The third document is a synthesis of the data contained in the first two histories, and it was recently prepared by the public information office of the hospital.

Due to the extremely limited nature of primary source material, I relied almost entirely on the secondary documents while preparing the Historical Summary. The dates of construction and structural information for all buildings surveyed were provided by the Office of General Services. The names of the architects were derived by comparing the date of construction to a chronological listing of the New York State Architects (see attachment).

New York State Architects

George L. Heins	1899 - 1907
Franklin B. Ware	1907 - 1913
Herman W. Hoefer	April 1912 - Feb. 1913
Lewis F. Pilcher	1913 - 1923
Sullivan W. Jones	1923 - 1928
William E. Haugaard (Director, Department of Architecture)	1928 - 1944

Manhattan Psychiatric Center

Buildings Built Before 1945

<u>Bldg. No.</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Date of Construction</u>	<u>Materials</u>	<u>Photo No.</u>
13	Residence hall Research	1917	Brick	06101.008513
41	Assembly hall	1923	Brick	06101.008514
64	Residence hall	1915	Brick	06101.008515
70	Greenhouse ruins	1901	Brick & Iron	1 06101.008516
85	Staff Residence	1902	Clapboard	2 06101.008517
86	Staff Residence	1902	Clapboard	3 06101.008518
87	Staff Residence	1902	Clapboard	4 06101.008519
--	Roman Garden	?1920s	Concrete pool & stairs	06101.008520
--	Pergola	?1920s	Wood	5 06101.008521

ANALYSIS OF PSYCHIATRIC CENTER AND DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER
CONSTRUCTION DATES OF FACILITY BUILDINGS
FOR OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW

Facility No. 10 Facility Name Manhattan P.C.

<u>Building No.</u>	<u>Building Name</u>	<u>Building Date</u>
13	Mabon	1916
#14		1870
#23		1890
#27		1865
#34		1897
41	Keener	1923
64		1916
#65		1915
70		1901
#83		1902
#84		1902
85		1902
86		1902
87		1902
#88		1902
#95		1930
#96		1929
#97		1929
#98		1929
101*		1960
104*		1970
106*		1954
108*		1965
110*		1963
114*		1953
115*		1953
117*		1950
118*		1950
120*		1970
121*		1964
122*		1955

Not existing at time of survey.

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* 1945 to Present



Bernadette Castro
Commissioner

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

RESOURCE EVALUATION

DATE: 06/04/96

STAFF: Peter Shaver

PROPERTY: Manhattan Psychiatric Center

MCD: New York

ADDRESS: Wards Island

COUNTY: New York

PROJECT REF: 96PRO419

USN: 06101.008256

I. ☐ Property is individually listed on SR/NR:

name of listing: _____

☐ Property is a contributing component of a SR/NR district:

name of district: _____

II. ☐ Property meets eligibility criteria.

☐ Property contributes to a district which appears to meet eligibility criteria. Pre SRB: ☐ Post SRB: ☐

SRB date

Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

A. ☐ Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;

B. ☐ Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;

C. ☐ Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possesses high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;

D. ☐ Have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

III. ☒ Property does not meet eligibility criteria.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Based on a survey undertaken in 1983, site visits, an update of the survey, and contextual information on file, the Manhattan Psychiatric Center does not meet the National Register criteria due to a loss of integrity of design, setting, materials, feeling, and association. (This overturns an earlier opinion.) Although once reputed to have been the largest psychiatric institution in the world, few buildings or features remain from the historic period of development and significance of the center. The 1983 survey identified six buildings, two structures, and one site (Roman Garden) constructed before 1945. Since 1983, one of the structures (greenhouse) has been demolished, one structure (pergola) is in deteriorated condition due to neglect, and one building (assembly hall) is also in deteriorated condition. Although the other five buildings (#13, Mabon Hall; #64, Keener Hall; #85, 86, 87, staff residences) and the Roman Garden may well be worthy of preservation, they do not appear to be individually eligible for the National Register and no longer retain integrity as a historic complex.

MANHATTAN
PSYCHIATRIC
CENTER

at

WARDS ISLAND

